1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

754 it to the second Dorjé Lapoon and requested him to sorcerise the
793 unknown thieves. Since the aggrieved party was his uncle, he agreed and started the necessary preparations. But while he was making the *cherkem* his elder brother, also a lama, arrived, saw what he was doing, and dissuaded him. Thereupon Pumri's husband took the meat to a Mun who has since died; he performed the sorcery and all the members of the thief's family (it is the family to which Kurma's second wife belonged) died one after the other; eight or nine are now dead and the family is almost extinct.

This is the last recorded case of sorcery being exercised in the district. The tradition is generally known about, and a certain awe of the three lamas who have this special knowledge is felt. But in Zongu there is no fear of one's 'dirt' being taken and used maliciously, and cut hair or nails are let lie where they fall; when they are in foreign parts however Lepchas say that they take care to burn or bury their 'dirt'. The Lepchas have also added an uncanonical rider to the Tibetan tradition of sorcery to the effect that the sorcery when it is directed against a particular person will only hurt that person if he or she is actually guilty; if he is not, the devil will return and destroy the sender. As opposed to the fear of poisoning the fear of sorcery is non-existent, and the subject is practically never mentioned in casual conversation.

684 Adultery, as will be seen later, is practically never taken any notice of; but if the instance should be particularly flagrant the aggrieved husband has two ways of punishing the lover; he can either beat the lover, thereby shaming him, or he can go and inform the Mandal. If he does this the Mandal will summon a meeting of the elders of the village and will then go to the house of the lover and summon him to confess; if he does so he has to pay to the husband either one chicken and a pig, or Rs. 5/-. If neither lover will confess the matter is abandoned. Discovered adultery is not a cause of enmity either between husband and wife or between husband and lover; only in the case of persistent adultery, and of the woman
● [586] showing a really marked preference for the lover, would the marriage be broken up.

685 The only other cause of dispute inside the village is the suspicion of boundary marks to fields having been moved. The only case recorded of this occurred fifteen years ago between an old man, since dead, and the father of Aga; this dispute, however, was patched up without calling in the Mandal, *youmi* and *gyapōn* who would normally settle such disputes, if the first representations

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

born in the neighbouring village of Panung; the wife to whose house he went is now dead, though her mother is still living there; Kurma is *asék*'d to another woman whom he hopes to bring home in 1938. Besides these two men there are two other men living in Lingthem who were not born there; these are Katel, whose story has already been told, and Takneum *youmi*, who was adopted as a boy by his father's married sister.

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v

It sometimes happens that after *asék* has been performed the boy and girl feel a really strong repulsion for one another. In many cases a girl will simulate repulsion and will refuse to let her groom sleep with her; but this is thought to be chiefly due to shame and to dislike of having to leave her parents' home; and therefore the young people are cajoled and bribed and threatened and even sometimes beaten to make them like one another. If however the repulsion felt is really strong and there seems no possibility of breaking it down, two solutions are open; either the whole arrangement is called off and the gifts or their equivalents in money returned, or else an alternative spouse, usually a younger brother of the groom and occasionally a younger sister of the bride, is offered instead. The best example of these arrangements can be shown in the history of Rigya. Rigya, who is twenty-two years old, was *asék*'d when he was about fifteen to one girl, but they did not get on at all well together and after a time the Mandal arranged for the marriage payments to be given back. His eldest brother, Aplung, was also *asék*'d to a girl he disliked; he therefore gave her to his youngest brother, Gyatso, who did not want her and ran away to Gangtok to work as a carpenter; thereupon the girl was given to Rigya, who was the middle brother. This is a somewhat irregular arrangement because Gyatso was younger than Rigya; but since Aplung was older she was looked on as being originally the wife of the elder brother and therefore marriageable. Aplung subsequently married a widow, a woman considerably older than himself.

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Most consummated marriages are stable and divorce or separation is very rare. The chief cause of divorce is usually for incompatibility of character or refusal to work properly on the part of the wife. If a man sends his wife away he has to pay a fine of Rs. 88 to the girl's father and has to divide with the wife all the movable

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1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

586 property, animals and children. If there is only one daughter the parents will divide her marriage price; she can live with either. If there is only one son the spouse keeping him must pay to the other Rs. 40, a cow and a pig and if the father keeps him a length of cloth to the wife, if the wife keeps him a copper vessel[9] to the husband. The last formal divorce in Lingthem was that of the first Dorjé Lapoon from his third and fourth wives (see Chapter Sixteen); a distant 'aunt' of the Mandal's was also divorced in this way in Sakhyong but there were no children.

If a woman runs away the husband's relatives will come for her and ask for her back or else claim the marriage price; but if the wife is unsatisfactory the husband will merely claim and get compensation in the form of the head and two legs of an ox and a scarf and rupee. Should such a girl re-marry a representative of the husband goes to the marriage; if the representative is the maternal uncle he is given Rs. 3 and half a leg of an ox; if the paternal uncle, Rs. 5 and the rump. By a recent decision of the twelve Mandals of Zongu in council it has been decided that these small recompenses shall be generally accepted for a runaway wife, instead of the large sums demanded earlier.

In the event of a woman showing a marked and continued preference for some man not her husband, the husband will almost always let her go to the lover. If the man cannot be classified as a 'younger brother' he must pay to the injured husband all the marriage expenses which he himself had paid earlier; or alternatively the girl's family will provide another girl as a substitute without further payment, but in that case the payments which the husband would have recovered from the lover will go to the girl's parents. If the lover is classifiable as a 'younger brother' the wife will probably be given to him for a small symbolical payment without any formalities; but it is understood that the younger brother will give special help if the elder brother remarries. Adultery, without really marked preference, is not a reason for divorce; and no anxiety is felt or expressed about the paternity of a man's children.

vi

581 In Lepcha theory marriage is not only a contract between two individuals, but also a contract between two groups; and they have

[436] [9] A copper pot is the most conspicuous Lepcha valuable: it is used in a great number of sociological transactions.

husband, but can take as companion any other member of her husband's family except her father-in-law; very often these visits are the means of producing further marriages between the groups.

The husband practically does not change status at all through marriage. Unless there have been premature deaths in the family he is still a very minor member of the household; he has a wife to work with him, but he has if anything to work harder now that he is a more responsible person. There are no outward signs of any sort which will show if a person is married or not. Marriages take place, as has been said, when the parties are still very young, and there is usually a considerable lapse of time between marriage and the birth of the first child. Only two women in Lingthem bore children before they were eighteen and the greater number usually had their first child somewhere around the age of twenty. These preliminary years are passed in the married couple getting accustomed to one another and setting up the pattern of mutual rights and duties on which Lepcha affection is founded. It is extremely uncommon and is considered very disreputable for a husband and wife who have children to separate, or even to show marked preference for anybody other than their own spouse. Such behaviour is stigmatised as shameless.

At the wife's first pregnancy the young couple acquire greater importance and responsibility and the second half of the pregnancy is, as has been described, a period of great care and watchfulness for both parties. With the birth of the child the couple become more important; now they are really part of the village and are carrying on the family line, and as a sign of this their names are changed and also their mode of address to their nearer kinsmen. The father and mother are called after their child—father of X and mother of X—and all the members of the generation above them are called grandfather and grandmother out of compliment to the child, and members of the same generation, especially if older, may be addressed as father or mother, though this latter is optional. But unless death has intervened they are still a minor part of the household; they continue working harder than ever now they have children to bring up, and it is only when their own family is growing up that they in their turn become the head of the household or one of the more important members of it. As the man's father gets older he gives over more and more responsibility to his eldest son, even possibly having the property registered in this son's name;

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 6

Some Lepcha Personalities

159 IT is time now to introduce some Lingtem personalities; and it will be convenient to start with the Church. The details of these brief biographies were not in every case contributed by the individual concerned; for, as with us, some Lepchas prefer to tell of others rather than to talk about themselves. I always felt apologetic when asking for these personal details. How many of us, I wonder, would care to impart the more intimate details of our private lives to a stranger, and one of an alien culture at that? In actual fact, however, most Lepchas have no reticence about such matters, and are not in the least offended if one refers to their illegitimate children, or asks for the names of the women with whom they are on intimate terms.

* * * * *

The senior Dorje-Lopön of Lingtem was a man of almost saintly appearance. Ascetic-looking and upright, you would have said that here was one who had long since cast off the cares of the flesh, but actually he could have given points to Casanova. When we first met him he was well over eighty years of age, but still spent most of the day helping in the fields. He first married when he was quite a young man, but tiring of his wife, by whom he had one son, he transferred his affections to a girl he liked better. He found the new wife so much to his liking, that, leaving his son in the care of the first, he forsook her and ran off to Darjeeling with the second. He came back one year later, and on his return his first wife's relatives attempted to bring about a reconciliation. This, 159 however, was unsuccessful, since the Dorje-Lopön had ● 586 completely tired of his first wife. All efforts having failed, she

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

was married off to another man, but the Dorje-Lopön was made to refund the original marriage price. He was, however, given the custody of his son Datoop, now a man of fifty, and one of the leading lights in the Lingtem monastery. As a child Datoop lived sometimes with his father and sometimes with his mother, who had now married the headman of a nearby village. It seemed as though the Dorje-Lopön would now settle down to respectable married life; but in the course of his wanderings he one day discovered an attractive young girl in a neighbouring village. Chapshay was her name, and almost at once he deserted his wife and went to live at the home of his new friend's parents, only coming to Lingtem for the purpose of attending periodical ceremonies at the monastery. After a time Chapshay's parents tired of the situation and suggested that the Dorje-Lopön might at least regularise his position. To this he consented; and accordingly presented them with the necessary carcass of a pig. While he was still living with Chapshay he one day espied her niece, with whom he instantly fell in love. It was a mere matter of months for him to make Atyok pregnant; and when this occurred her parents forced him to do the ceremony known as *Tip-song*, in order that she should not give birth to a bastard. This was followed by marriage. For some time the three lived together at Chapshay's home, the Dorje-Lopön still coming to Lingtem from time to time. In those days, before the present building had been erected, the main door of the monastery faced towards the east. There was but one big prayer-drum, and it was housed in a separate little building known as the *Hla-gong*. Living in Lingtem at the time was one Jiroong, whose wife, a woman much older than he, was also an Inebu. She had already been married before going to live with Jiroong, but her former husband and all his near relations were dead. She was not attractive; but since Jiroong's parents were too poor to obtain a better wife for him he was forced to submit. Jiroong's wife was in charge of the *Hla-gong*, which meant that she was often about in the monastery; and in those days

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

amicably settled, for nothing happened for the next five weeks. It then transpired that the Dorje-Lopön and Jiroong's wife had made a private arrangement to meet from time to time, and that they had not the slightest intention of putting an end to their affair. During this time, although the Dorje-Lopön was living in the same house as Chapshay and Atyok, it was noticed that he had no relations with them; and it was on this account that people became suspicious. Chapshay and Atyok put up with this state of affairs for a further three months and then departed to their own home. An official protest followed and this time a divorce was arranged, as a result of which the Dorje-Lopön was required to give one ox, one pig, one copper-pot and twenty rupees in cash as compensation. As he had no ready cash he borrowed the twenty rupees from the monastery funds; and has still not liquidated the debt. Having settled this affair he announced that he had done with women for the rest of his life, and that henceforth he would remain celibate. He went so far as to say that he would not marry Jiroong's wife even should the opportunity occur. Two months later Jiroong went down to the Mandal, told him that the Dorje-Lopön had again started meeting his wife, and asked what he should do. Another meeting was held; and as a result of its deliberations Datoop was ordered never to let his father out of the house by himself. The Dorje-Lopön, although head of the monastery, was told of this order and specifically warned that he must only visit the monastery for the purpose of attending public ceremonies, and that in no case was he ever to enter the *Hla-gong*. In spite of this the old man still contrived regularly to meet Jiroong's wife, as a result of which her husband decided to divorce her. For some time all three lived together in Jiroong's house, and in the meantime the Dorje-Lopön helped Jiroong in his fields.

Poor Jiroong deserved a better fate than has actually been his lot. After a number of friendships here and there he grew tired of an aimless existence and decided to marry again. There then came to the village the sister of Tempa. She was

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

000 wife. It appears that in such cases the first wife's feelings
595 are not in any way considered, and the *Thim seut* is given, not to appease her but to prevent her becoming ill, which might otherwise be the case.

586 If a man wishes to divorce his wife he must pay eight-eighty rupees in cash to her father and give her one-half of all his movable property. This is known as *Gay-top*. Children also are divided between the two parents by mutual arrangement. Should there be an only daughter her eventual marriage price will be divided between the parents; and in the case of an only son it is usual for him to remain with his father, who pays the mother an additional forty rupees, one cow, one pig and a length of cloth for this privilege. A daughter may live with either parent; but whatever the decision, the question of payment does not in her case arise. In exceptional circumstances it may be arranged that a son shall remain with his mother, and in this case she gives the above presents to her husband, substituting an ox for the cow and a copper pot for the length of cloth.

There are no cases of divorce in Lingtem within living memory, nor does it often happen elsewhere; but in view of the constitution of Lepcha society there would appear to be little need of divorce, since it fulfils no useful function.